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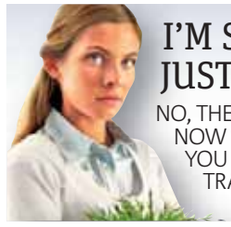
NEWS WORTH SHARING.

If not by pipeline, then why not rail?

A joint B.C.-Alberta report is looking at whether oil-by-train is viable, drawing the ire of critics PAGE 6

Ducks edge Canucks in OT

Vancouver suffers a last-second 4-3 loss to Anaheim PAGE 18



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Civic wards urged after death

Surrey. MLA wants better representation for Newton to combat crime, improve safety in the wake of Julie Paskall's fatal beating

ELIZABETH HAMES
vancouver@metronews.ca

RCMP officers talk outside the Newton Arena in Surrey on Dec. 30, where 53-year-old Julie Paskall was fatally beaten. DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

A Surrey politician says a ward system of government would give Newton the representation it needs to combat drug dealing, thievery and homelessness in the wake of the beating death of a Surrey mother.

Surrey-Newton NDP MLA Harry Bains said his constituents have been calling on the city to take measures to improve safety in their neighbourhood for years, but their cries for help have fallen on deaf ears because none of Surrey's eight councillors live in the area under the current "at-large" system.

A ward system would give Newton a voice at city hall because each of Surrey's six distinct town centres would be represented by a different councillor, he said.

"I'm sure you would have better attention given to (Newton)," Bains said.

"At least someone would be accountable for that particular area."

Mayor Dianne Watts could not be reached for comment on Sunday.

However, she has rejected the idea of implementing wards in Surrey in the past, citing infighting among city councillors 50 years earlier when the city was governed under such a system.

Bains' proposal follows the death of Julie Paskall, who was fatally beaten outside Newton Arena Dec. 29 as she waited to pick up her son from a hockey tournament.

Police believe robbery to be the motive behind the attack, and they are investigating whether it is connected to a similar incident at the nearby transit loop on Dec. 16.

The city has responded with promises to improve safety in the area.

In a Friday news release, Surrey announced it would beef up police presence, conduct raids on nearby "drug houses," upgrade lighting infrastructure and consider whether CCTV cameras are needed around the arena.

It also has plans to rip out the heritage trees in the dark wooded area behind the arena, well-known among locals as a haven for drug dealers and squatters.

But for residents who have been calling for these changes for years, the promises come too late.

"It's unfortunate that sometimes it takes someone's life before they start to pay attention," said Bains.

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Unprepared hikers hamper North Shore Rescue search efforts

'I'm not happy'. Rescue helicopter diverted from final day of searching for U.K. tourist Tom Billings

Two young, unprepared hikers who ignored rescuers' instructions to avoid a dangerous pass on Saturday forced North Shore Rescue to divert resources from a search operation for a missing British tourist.

When helicopter crews spotted the twenty-something men in the Hanes Valley as they searched for Tom Billings, North Shore Rescue team leader Tim Jones had a three-man team drop down to tell the backpackers not to ascend Crown Pass.

"My concern was that these guys were going to get themselves in the same predicament that Tom Billings did," Jones said, adding Metro Vancouver closed the popular summer trail due to hazardous winter conditions.

"They had no ice axes, no crampons, no rope, no helmets. They had a pair of snow shoes between them."

The hikers assured the team they would camp below the boulder field, but the helicopter kept an eye on them just in case.

Hours later, rescuers saw the hikers drop their packs and start climbing the pass.

"They went ahead and did it," Jones said. "Here we are looking for a young man (crews have spent about 1,600 hours trying to find Billings), and right on the last day of our official search this happens. I'm not happy."

The hikers managed to get out safely, although they had to slide down the rocky terrain that's unstable due to the light snow pack, but not before tying up the helicopter team until dusk. The mission to find Billings was unsuccessful.

Jones called the young men's parents, who were horrified to learn their sons disregarded the rescue team's advice.

Jones isn't looking for an apology or retribution, but wants the men — and anyone who plans to traverse the backcountry during winter — to take a mountaineering course.

"Our message to everyone is personal responsibility — you cannot replace common sense," he said.

A man takes part in an avalanche skills training course at Mount Seymour last January. North Shore Rescue advises anyone who uses the backcountry in the winter to take appropriate training courses. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO FILE

Despite the incident, North Shore Rescue maintains there should be no fines or charges for rescue efforts.

Fines create a tactical disadvantage and puts teams at risk because people try to evade rescue, said Jones, a veteran search and rescue leader.

EMILY JACKSON/METRO

Police suspend search for missing U.K. tourist

Tom Billings TWITTER

The search for a 22-year-old British tourist has been called off after more than a month of extensive efforts to find the seasoned hiker in the North Shore mountains.

Police suspended the search for Tom Billings, last seen near Commercial and Broadway in Vancouver on Nov. 25, after a massive search operation on Saturday failed to turn up clues of his whereabouts near the Crown Creek and Hanes Valley Drainages.

With the aid of Talon Helicopters, 30 members from North Shore Rescue and two RCMP dog teams scoured the area but were unable to find any sign of Billings.

"All of the tips provided to police about Billings have been followed up and all investigative leads exhausted," Vancouver police Const. Brian Montague said in a statement.

"Any focused mountain searches will be discontinued unless police receive additional and credible information."

North Shore Rescue crews will, however, continue to look for clues that could lead them to Billings during the course of other searches.

Support for the rescue teams and Billings' family poured out on social media after the search had been called off.

Billings' father, Oxford lawyer Martin Billings, travelled to Vancouver in December to plead for tips to his son's whereabouts.

"The things that have gone through my mind are, in many ways, too horrible to mention. I can't deny that," he said at an emotional police press conference before returning home to be with his "very distraught" wife and daughters.

His son had planned to return to England on Dec. 7.

EMILY JACKSON/METRO

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Matthew Huszar. Body identified as missing man

Vancouver police say a body found on Dec. 31 in the water at a marina in False Creek has been identified as Matthew Huszar.

He was 25 years old when he was last seen leaving an office Christmas party just before midnight on Dec. 16, 2011, near Water and Abbott Street.

Huszar never arrived at his apartment on Vancouver's Eastside.

Police said in a statement that the investigation into Huszar's disappearance and death does not indicate anything suspicious and foul play is not suspected.

Police say they have been in contact with the Huszar family and ask that the media respect their privacy at this time.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

From left, Matthew Huszar's father Rod, younger sister Rachael and mother Danny offered $10,000 for information on his disappearance. METRO FILE

Mars One. Shortlist holds two British Columbians

Two B.C. residents took a small step toward Mars when they were shortlisted for the private non-profit organization Mars One.

The foundation opened up an Indiegogo campaign in the hope of establishing a permanent human settlement on Mars by 2023. After the first four astronauts reach the red planet, more groups will join them every two years.

Alex Marion, a 26-year-old psychology graduate from Surrey, confirmed on Twitter last Monday that he was among the 1,058 applicants selected for an interview.

"I believe that the Mars One mission can do what everything else couldn't, and finally unite humanity with a higher purpose. Something more than survival or competition," said Marion on his website.

Marina Miral, 30, from Sooke on Vancouver Island has also been shortlisted to be one of 40 people to travel to Mars on a one-way ticket.

Scott McGillivray, president of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, called the project overly ambitious.

"It's like learning how to run before you learn how to walk," he said. "We haven't even colonized the moon and we're trying to colonize Mars?"

The directors of the $6-billion project also hope that a reality show documenting the astronaut selection, training and first few years of settlement will help fund the expedition.

SINDHU DHARMARAJAH/FOR METRO

Mount Washington

No snow prompts ski-resort export

Mount Washington Alpine Resort, near Courtenay, has negotiated a deal that will allow their customers to ski and board for free at Whistler Blackcomb until the end of the month.

This time last year, Mount Washington had about 350 centimetres of snow at its mid-mountain baseline, but this year it only has about 20 centimetres. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Abbotsford

Gang member killed in targeted attack: Police

A man identified by police as a gang member was the victim of the first murder of 2014 in Abbotsford.

Sgt. Adam MacIntosh says Matthew Gordon Campbell, 31, was stabbed Thursday afternoon.

He staggered to a business suffering from a severe neck wound before dying. THE CANADIAN PRESS

A tranquil moment before the oncoming rain

A woman is silhouetted while paddling a kayak on False Creek in Vancouver on Sunday. Environment Canada is calling for a mix of sun and cloud on Monday, with showers returning Tuesday. DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Officials urge flu shots for H1N1

'It is not too late.' Five adults have had to be admitted to intensive care in Vancouver alone

ELIZABETH HAMES
vancouver@metronews.ca

The H1N1 influenza virus is spreading fast across Metro Vancouver, prompting health officials to urge residents to get the flu shot.

There are more than a dozen patients suffering from H1N1 in intensive care units from Burnaby to White Rock to Hope, reports Fraser Health. All are expected to recover.

In Vancouver alone, 20 adults and five children have been hospitalized with the flu.

Of those, five adults have had cases severe enough to require admission to the intensive care unit.

There have been no deaths reported in Metro Vancouver.

"We are seeing small pockets of very severe disease," says Dr. Paul Van Buynder, Fraser Health's chief medical health officer, in a Friday news release.

"We are urging those who have not already had their flu shot to get one. It is not too late."

In Alberta, there have been 965 lab-confirmed cases. Another 251 people have been hospitalized due to influenza, and five people have died.

The H1N1 strain of the influenza virus was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization in 2009 when it killed thousands worldwide.

Those who have received the flu shot this year are immunized against the H1N1 strain.

Flu shots are still available at many local health clinics, doctor's offices and pharmacies.

Anyone visiting a healthcare facility who has not been vaccinated must wear a mask to prevent the spread of the disease.

Visit immunizebc.ca for more information.

WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

On watch

"We are seeing small pockets of very severe disease."

Dr. Paul Van Buynder, Fraser Health's chief medical health officer, in a news release

Norovirus outbreak puts hospital on alert

An outbreak of norovirus at St. Paul's Hospital has health officials warning people to avoid visiting patients in impacted wards.

"As of Friday, we had eight patients affected," said Trudi Beutal, communications leader for Vancouver Coastal Health, "and several staff are showing symptoms as well."

Patients in two units have been affected by the virus, and officials are attempting to stop its spread to other areas in the hospital.

St. Paul's is functioning as normal, and patients should not be alarmed. Visitors are still welcome to other wards.

"Noro is everywhere. If you yourself have symptoms, we ask that you stay home," Beutal said.

Other visitors will be asked to wash their hands before and after visits and will be told to wear a mask, gown and gloves for people visiting the impacted wards.

The hospital has set more hand-sanitation stations, created more cleaning solutions and limited patients from moving into infected areas for extra precaution, Beutal added.

Norovirus, also called the "winter vomiting disease," is common but not limited to hospitals at this time of year. It is contagious, and symptoms include nausea, abdominal pain and vomiting.

SINDHU DHARMARAJAH/FOR METRO

Gap. Pictures of local man-nequin go viral

A local man has turned himself into a real-life Gap mannequin.

Steve Venegas, a Vancouver-based media specialist and podcast host, looks to add mannequin to his profile with his new campaign, The Gap Mannequin Campaign Project. Venegas travels to local Gap stores and tries on outfits worn by mannequins, takes photos of himself mimicking the poses and posts them to his blog, gapmannequinproject.tumblr.com.

The blog launched on Tuesday and picked up 500 followers within a day. In addition, his campaign receives views from sites like BuzzFeed and Trend Hunter.

Steve Venegas with his outfit twin. GAPMANNEQUINPROJECT.TUMBLR.COM

"I try on clothes and have my photo taken because it's funny to dress like a dummy," says Venegas on his blog.

SINDHU DHARMARAJAH/FOR METRO

Red Mountain

Searchers find missing Boy Scouts

A search-and-rescue team has found two Washington State Boy Scouts lost on Red Mountain in the Kootenay region.

RCMP say the two 16-year-olds were reported overdue by resort officials Thursday after they failed to return from a day of skiing. Rossland Search and Rescue volunteers quickly located tracks on the back side of Grey Mountain, a ski area that opened this season.

Cpl. Dave Johnson says the teens were located in good health after the search resumed Friday.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Point Grey Road segment closing to cars on Jan. 18

Traffic on the soon-to-be-closed portion of Point Grey Road as seen in summer 2013. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO FILE

Kitsilano greenway. Cars will be diverted along Macdonald and encouraged to use 4th Avenue, Broadway, 10th Avenue or 16th Avenue

It's the most controversial aspect of the Kitsilano greenway, and it will be implemented in two weeks.

The section of Point Grey Road between Macdonald and Alma streets will be closed to through traffic for vehicles as of Jan. 18.

The closure is part of a larger seaside greenway plan that will eventually complete the gap for cyclists between the Burrard Bridge and the western beaches on a route that prioritizes safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

The proposal, approved in August, was one of the most controversial of 2013 with nearly 200 people signing up to give council a piece of their minds.

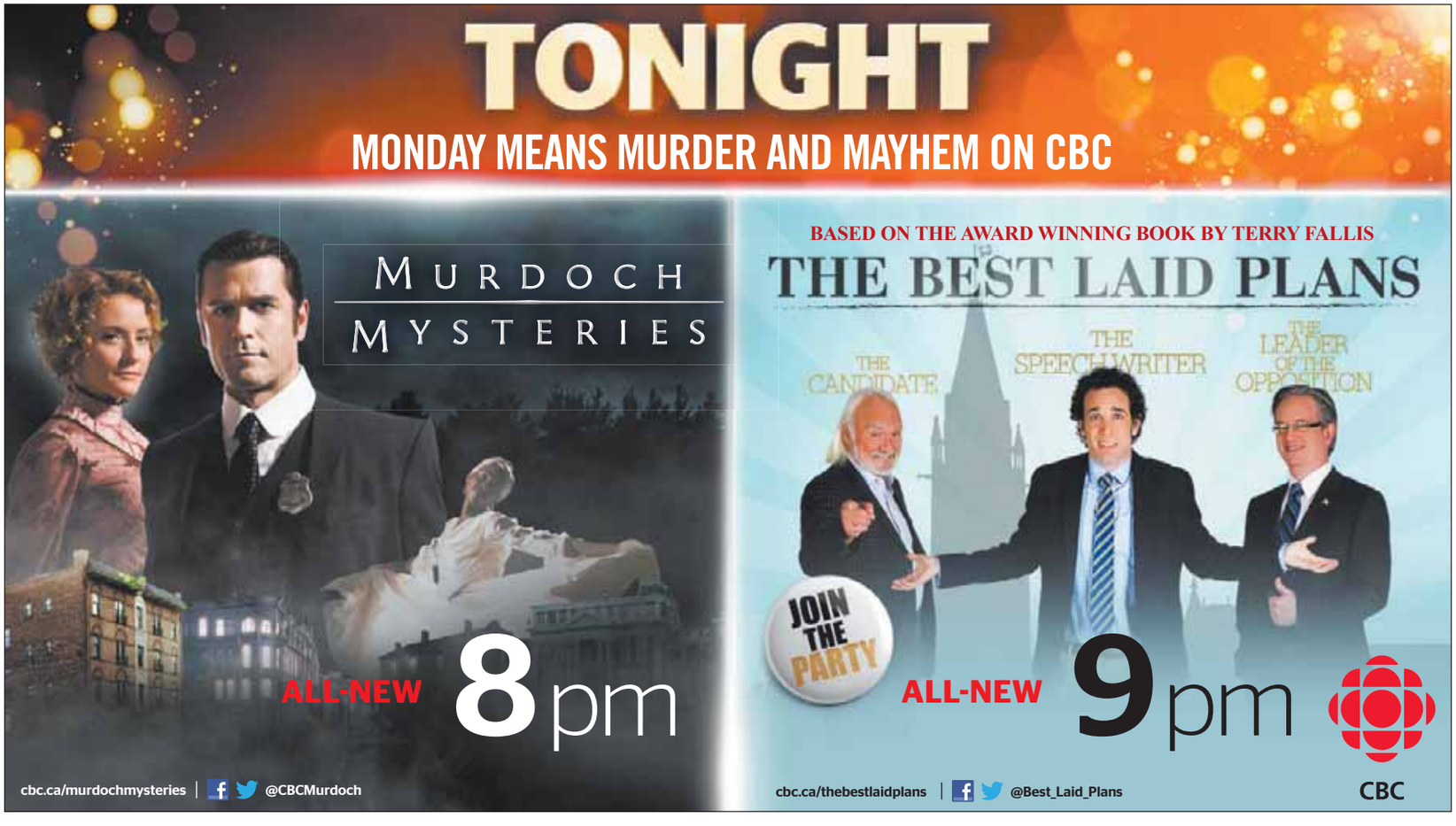
Proponents argued removing commuter cars from the residential street would help slow traffic and increase safety.

Opponents, however, said the closure would create somewhat of an enclave and boost property values for the multi-million dollar homes along the street at the expense of owners on Macdonald. They also argued the closure would make it more difficult for drivers and seniors to access certain venues.

Ultimately, council decided the greenway was needed to improve safety along the transportation network.

The city will extend Tatlow Park to the waterfront in order to block westbound vehicles that follow the route from Cornwall Avenue to the beaches or UBC.

It will, however, leave enough room for emergency vehicles to quickly enter the pathway. EMILY JACKSON/METRO



B.C., Alberta look into moving oilsands crude by rail: Report

'Viable alternative to pipeline movement.'
Environmental group calls idea 'underhanded,' says it raises safety questions in light of recent train accidents

A task force report has been handed in to the British Columbia and Alberta governments that examines the idea of transporting oilsands crude via rail if proposed pipelines don't get the green light, government documents show.

It's an idea the environmental group ForestEthics calls "underhanded."

It's a "backdoor way for industry to bring tankers to the coast without the same sort of public oversight or public process that we've had around the Enbridge pipeline or would have around the Kinder Morgan pipeline," said Ben West, campaign director for ForestEthics.

A joint provincial working group was announced by premiers Christy Clark and Alison Redford in July to develop recommendations related to energy exports and the opening of new export markets for products like bitumen for the two provinces, including pipeline and rail transport.

"Rail can be considered a viable alternative to pipeline movement based on costs of transport," the terms of reference for the group states. "If pipelines are not developed, rail will step into the void to deliver bitumen to the West Coast."

West said the report raises safety questions, especially in light of two recent high-profile train accidents.

Oil transport by rail has become a contentious topic after a train containing crude oil derailed and exploded in Lac-Mégantic, Que., in July, killing 47 people, and another train exploded without injuries last month in North Dakota.

"Myself and other people were pretty freaked out about what happened there," West said of the two fiery blasts.

The provincial working group was mandated to submit a report to both leaders by the end of December.

An Alberta government official did not respond to a question about the completion or release of the report, while an official in Clark's office said the report is complete but that no date has been set for a public release. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Details

The task force is led by Steve Carr, Deputy Minister of Natural Gas Development in B.C., and Grant Sprague, Deputy Minister of Energy in Alberta.

'Big rate of increase'

More boreal forest protected, but challenges remain: Group

Canada has made significant strides in protecting the vast boreal forest that stretches across most of its provinces and territories, but the world's largest intact forest ecosystem still faces threats, says an environmental group.

The amount of boreal forest under some form of government protection has doubled since 2007 to about 12 per cent of the total area, biologist Jeff Wells of the Canadian Boreal Initiative said recently.

"That's a big rate of increase in a short time and we're hoping that's going to continue," he said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

New Brunswick

Officials grappled with telling public about unsterilized forceps

Officials at New Brunswick's largest health authority deliberated for three months whether to inform the public about unsterilized biopsy forceps before finally releasing the information and advising patients to get tested for hepatitis and HIV last year.

Documents recently released outline how staff with the Horizon Health Network spent weeks trying to assess the risk to patients. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Midwest, Northeast braces for 'polar vortex'

A person struggles to cross a street in blowing and falling snow Sunday in St. Louis. While much of Canada was in a deep freeze, snow-covered roads, high winds and ice were creating dangerous driving conditions from the Midwest to the Northeast U.S. on Sunday ahead of a "polar vortex" — a counterclockwise-rotating pool of cold, dense air that is set to affect more than half of the continental U.S. throughout Sunday and into Monday and Tuesday, with wind chill warnings stretching from Montana to Alabama. JEFF ROBERSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

No injuries reported. Plane from Toronto slides off runway at N.Y. airport

A plane from Toronto slid into snow as it turned onto a taxiway after landing at John F. Kennedy International Airport on Sunday, halting flights at the airport for two hours and causing residual delays.

"It could have been worse, a much worse scenario," Jordan Houlton told reporters after he emerged from Delta Connection 4100 along with 34 other passengers and crew members about 90 minutes after the slippery diversion of the aircraft.

Federal Aviation Administration spokeswoman Kathleen Bergen said there was no immediate report of injuries after the plane landed safely at 8 a.m., only to lose its footing and slide into snow as it turned from the runway onto a taxiway.

The plane was then towed to a gate with passengers on board, she said.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates the airport, said operations for domestic and international flights were suspended for about two hours because of slick runways, leaving passengers at crowded gates. Flights resumed after 10 a.m. on two of the airport's four runways, but residual delays for passengers were expected to linger.

The landing came two days after a major snowstorm dumped 15 centimetres of snow in New York City, forcing the cancellation of hundreds of flights and stranding passengers both in the city and throughout the world who were heading to New York. Passengers from cancelled flights continued to fill the few remaining seats on many planes already crowded by holiday travellers.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

N.L. blackouts. Premier calls for conservation during 'critical period'

Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Kathy Dunderdale says her government will be asking large consumers of energy to conserve power as the province grapples with power outages and rolling blackouts following a heavy storm.

Dunderdale said energy conservation would be paramount in the coming weeks and large consumers of energy will be asked to close or reduce operations over the next few days.

"We're looking at customers in the province who use a lot of electricity ... and see if we can have access to that power over the next number of days until we get through this critical period," said Dunderdale at a news conference in St. John's. "But everybody has a role to play in this." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Student allowed to use medicinal pot at school

Marijuana vaporizer. Noah Kirkman's device is no bigger than a walkie-talkie

JEREMY NOLAIS
Metro in Calgary

Smoking marijuana on school property would land most high schoolers in the principal's office, but Noah Kirkman is actually encouraged to head there and ingest the drug.

The 15-year-old Western Canada High School student is a licensed medicinal marijuana user after finding the drug far more effective than prescription offerings for treating Tourette Syndrome and attention-deficit disorder.

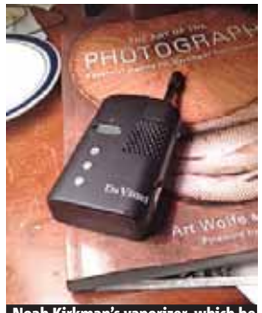
"It doesn't have any withdrawal effects and I can't (overdose) on it," explained the confident student, who has aspirations of practising photojournalism someday. "It helps me keep calm; it helps me keep focused."

Kirkman received his licence in September and he and mother Lisa say they proactively approached Calgary Board of Education administrators to discuss terms on how the teen could ingest his medicine on school property.

At first, it was thought Kirkman could use his "one-hitter," which looks like a cigarette, out front of the school. But when it became too cold it was agreed he could pop by the vice-principal's office and use his marijuana vaporizer three times a day, before class, after class and over the lunch hour.

Kirkman's device is no bigger than a walkie-talkie and he simply flicks a switch that heats his medicine to 186 C.

The CBE would not confirm the Kirkman family's account, citing privacy concerns, and said it doesn't have information to indicate whether other students have been granted similar concessions to use marijuana on school property. But Kirkman and his mom were interviewed separately to determine whether their accounts check out and Metro was provided with proof of the teen's medicinal marijuana licence.



Noah Kirkman's vaporizer, which he uses inside his Calgary high school. COURTESY NOAH KIRKMAN

Lisa is also a licensed marijuana user and no stranger to generating headlines for her use of the drug. In 2011, she and three others ingested marijuana using a vaporizer aboard a WestJet flight bound for Toronto.

Canadian set for two weeks on Mars 'camp'

An Ottawa woman is living like a Martian for the next two weeks in a Utah desert research facility designed to simulate life on the red planet.

Elizabeth Howell, a Carleton University graduate and aerospace science PhD student in North Dakota, joins a six-member crew in the Mars Desert Research Station near Hanksville, Utah. One crew member is from France and four are from the U.S.

The MDRS is a two-floor, 1,200 square foot facility, equipped with bathrooms, bedrooms, and ladders to access a common area. Unable to speak by phone Sunday, she wrote in an email to Metro that her living arrangement is like staying at a cabin, but with a space twist.

"It's powered by generators, we have limited running water, and we leave the habitat in groups of at least two for safety reasons," wrote Howell. "The twist is that once we enter the simulation, we generally only wear spacesuits while we're outside. That's because on Mars, you would need a spacesuit to survive."

Elizabeth Howell is seen here in this photo taken on Saturday, en route to the Mars Desert Research Station near Hanksville, Utah. CONTRIBUTED

Howell was selected to participate in the program run by the not-for-profit group The Mars Society until Jan. 20. She is also a freelance journalist for several science publications.

She will act as an observer and document her journey for Space.com as well as gather information for the crew's experiments.

While she said she believes humans will one day inhabit Mars, she's not interested in being one of them if it means there's no return flight home.

Christy Foley, a 32-year-old Edmonton woman, is one of the latest to make the short list for a one-way trip to Mars in 2024 through The Mars One Project, developed by Dutch space entrepreneur Bas Landorp.

Howell is also tweeting about her experience at twitter.com/howellspace.

JOE LOFARO/METRO IN OTTAWA

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A member of the al-Qaida-linked Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) gives a lecture at an engineering college in the northern city of Raqqa, Syria. ISIL and rival rebels clashed in Syria on Sunday, undermining the broader opposition movement to oust President Bashar Assad. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Al-Qaida-linked group and Syrian rebels at odds

Opposition. Bloody fighting that began Friday expands over the weekend

Syrian opposition fighters battled rival rebels from an al-Qaida-linked faction across parts of northern Syria on Sunday, as deep fissures within the insurgency erupted into some of the most serious and sustained violence between groups opposed to President Bashar Assad since the country's conflict began.

The clashes, which broke out on Friday and have spread to parts of four provinces, pit an array of moderate and ultraconservative Islamist brigades against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, an extremist group that has become both feared and resented in parts of opposition-held areas for trying to impose its hardline interpretation of Islam.

The fighting appeared to be an outburst of violence against the al-Qaida-linked group in certain communities where tensions with other opposition factions were simmering, activists and analysts said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

India. Death toll rises in building collapse

Rescuers found two more bodies overnight under a massive pile of broken concrete left when a residential building collapsed in southern India over the weekend, raising the death toll to at least 17 workers, a lawmaker said Monday.

Local legislator Ramesh Tawadkar said rescuers have so far recovered 23 survivors. But there was little hope of finding any more people alive in the rubble two days after the collapse.

Police said they were unable to determine how many workers were on site when the five-storey structure, which was under construction, crumpled Saturday because they could not reach the builder or contractor, who are suspected of fleeing. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Czech Republic

Illegal weapons found after blast

A total of 12 illegal weapons were found at the Palestinian embassy complex in Prague where a possible booby-trapped safe killed the ambassador, police said Sunday.

The deputy Palestinian foreign minister, however, denied the weapons were illegal.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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‘Click farms’ sow social media buzz

3 million people like this. Making it look as if you’ve won friends and influenced people has become big business

Celebrities, businesses and even the U.S. State Department have bought bogus Facebook likes, Twitter followers or YouTube viewers from offshore “click farms,” where workers tap, tap, tap the thumbs up button, view videos or retweet comments to inflate social media numbers.

Since Facebook launched almost 10 years ago, users have sought to expand their social networks for financial gain, winning friends, bragging rights and professional clout. And social media companies cite the levels of engagement to tout their value.

But an Associated Press examination has found a growing global marketplace for fake clicks, which tech companies struggle to police. Online records, industry studies and interviews show companies are capitalizing on the opportunity to make millions of dollars by duping social media.

For as little as a half cent each click, websites hawk everything from LinkedIn connections to make members appear more employable to SoundCloud plays to influence record label interest.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

‘Click farms’ inflate social media numbers. STEPHEN LAM/GETTY IMAGES

Five ‘click farm’ facts

1. A click farm is a business that sells clicks for fans, likes, followers, views and more.
2. People buy clicks to boost their social media numbers, which can lead to profits and popularity.
3. Buying and selling clicks violates social media user rules but is not regulated by U.S. state or federal agencies.
4. Click farm revenues are estimated to be worth hundreds of millions.
5. Sellers offer clicks for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, SoundCloud, YouTube, Vimeo and more.

Tokyo auction

Bluefin tuna prices nosedive

Sushi restaurateur Kiyoshi Kimura paid 7.36 million yen (about $70,000 US) for a 230-kilogram bluefin tuna in the year’s celebratory first auction at Tokyo’s Tsukiji market on Sunday, just five per cent of what he paid a year earlier despite signs that the species is in serious decline.

Environmentalists say growing worldwide consumption of bluefin tuna is leading to its depletion, and that those in charge of managing fisheries for the species are failing to take responsible action to protect it.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tech. Wearable gadgets set to finally move into mainstream this year

Will 2014 be remembered as the year wearable computing took off?

Upstart entrepreneurs and major manufacturers such as Samsung, Qualcomm and Sony certainly hope so.

Gadgets that you snap, buckle or fasten to your body are already marketed to fitness freaks obsessed with tracking every possible piece of information their bodies produce. There are countless smartwatches for tech nerds who’d rather glance at their wrists to check messages than reach for their smartphones. And thousands of people are already seeing the world differently with the help of the Internet-connected eyewear, Google Glass.

Technology companies will stretch the wearable concept further this week in Las Vegas at the International CES event, the industry’s annual trade show.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Attendees wear Google Glass while posing for a group photo during a conference in May. GETTY IMAGES

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PROPERTY VALUES ARE A STRETCH

URBAN COMPASS

Paul Sullivan
vancouver@metronews.ca

Chip Wilson and I both got our property assessments this week, and we both experienced an increase, even though B.C. property values are down five per cent from last year.

That's where the similarities end, by the way. The Lululemon founder's Point Grey Road cottage is assessed as B.C.'s most expensive property at $54,206,000. My assessment, on the other hand, is roughly the value of one of his nine bathrooms. One without a whirlpool bath.

Not that I'm complaining. Homeowners in Kitimat have seen their assessments increase by more than 25 per cent, which usually means higher taxes.

Not only that, they have to live in Kitimat. The leap is based on the distinct possibility that maybe some day someone will build a pipeline or a liquefied natural gas refinery in the vicinity.

Imagine what will happen if something actually gets built. Pow.

Meanwhile, back on English Bay, the most richly assessed are treated to views of … each other. For example, the denizens of Point Grey Road get to gaze across the water to the mountains and West Vancouver while the residents of the West Vancouver waterfront get a panoramic view of Point Grey Road.

I'm sure they like what they see.

I'm not sure what all the fuss is about on Point Grey Road. If you want a really deluxe address upon which to hang your custom-made hat, I recommend Belmont Avenue, which looms over Spanish Banks and features five of the top 10 most expensive homes in B.C., ranging from $24,547,000 to $46,023,000, last year's most expensive house, as Wilson's LuluLand mansion was still being built.

That parade of champion homes also puts the Kitimat gold rush into proper perspective: The average value of a single-family home in Kitimat is now $228,000, which might cover the garden shed on Belmont Avenue.

This immense wealth seems unreal, and real-estate experts are engaged in an ongoing argument about whether or not B.C. property values are the result of a bubble that could pop at any minute and leave homeowners from Point Grey to Prince George in the same boat: stuck with a white elephant they can't unload.

Meanwhile, a single-family house with a 33-foot lot in East Vancouver is worth $1.13 million. And no matter how many times you read it over, it still comes out the same. In fact, there's not much difference between property values on the east or west side, unless of course your west side includes Belmont Avenue.

Chip and I have until Jan. 31 to appeal our assessments. I think it's always prudent to praise the good efforts of estimable organizations such as B.C. Assessment and the Canada Revenue Agency. And if they'd like me to sacrifice a goat or whatever, I'm good for it.

As for Chip, after the year he just had, he's probably learned the value of keeping his own counsel.

ZOOM

Here fishy, fishy, fishy

CHUNG SUNG-JUN/GETTY IMAGES

South Korean festival gets off to icy start

A child casts a line through a hole into a frozen river during an ice fishing competition at the Hwacheon Sancheoneo Ice Festival over the weekend in Hwacheon-gun, South Korea.

The annual event attracts thousands of visitors and features a mountain trout ice fishing competition in which participants compete with traditional lures or with bare hands.

The festival is a big deal for the country. It was recently selected as one of the representative festivals by the South Korean government and CNN declared it one of the seven winter wonders in 2011.

GETTY IMAGES

Running through Jan. 26

- The exhibits include the Ice Sculpture Park, Michelangelo Special Exhibition and the 3D Digital Gallery.
- In addition to ice fishing, there is also sleigh riding, sledding and a daily ice show.

An angler's catch of the day.
GETTY IMAGES

Clickbait

ANDREW FIFIELD
andrew.fifield@metronews.ca

CONTRIBUTED

Bandcamp is an online store that allows music fans to purchase albums directly from the artist, often allowing purchasers to name their price. But wait! There's more! You can also preview albums in their entirety before buying. It's a can't-miss proposition, so swing by and check out these Canadian artists.

The Royal Streets:

Relentlessly pleasant acoustic pop music, buoyed by plenty of cooing and a classic rock flavour. It's the type of music you'll often come across in coffee shops, complete with the gentle, raspy voice and quiet crash cymbals. Sunday morning music, in other words. (theroyalstreets.bandcamp.com)

Sean Nicholas Savage:

There's a staggering amount of music on this Montreal musician's page, and it's hard to find a "skippable" song in the bunch. Sunny pop, piano ballads, moody electro — it's all here. A prolific writer and a busy tourer, there's a good chance he'll be in your town some time this year. (seannicholassavage.bandcamp.com)

Jonathan Atkins:

A singer-songwriter with a devastating ear for harmonies and a delicate touch with lyrics that slide perfectly into a horrid winter. There's a definite Celtic touch, but far sweeter than something like Mumford and Sons. (jonathanatkins.bandcamp.com)

Twitter

@metropicks asked: Hey travellers! Don't tip if you're at a Miami Beach eatery. Restaurants/bars automatically add 15 per cent gratuity. Should they?

@novascotiarasta: Considering low-paid servers, be fair, add it upfront. Don't have them work (or not work) for tips.

@mcmounce: Gratuity inclusion should be clearly advertised but isn't as well as tourists exemption from sales tax

@RMichaelRoberts: automatic tip only if servers inform and remind customers that Tip is already applied and no further tip required

@tiikerikani: The food isn't worth the price at all, tip or not

@bhofley: Don't think so. Removes any incentive for them to provide good service.

@Lowpass: they do cause snowbirds are notoriously bad tippers and wait staff make like $7.80/hr in florida. 15% is minimum.

Follow @metropicks and take part in our daily poll.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU: Send us your comments: vancouverletters@metronews.ca

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Ebooks

Guillermo del Toro's Cabinet of Curiosities

By. Guillermo del Toro & Marc Zicree

Kindle/iBooks/Kobo

MIND THE APP
Kris Abel
@RealKrisAbel
scene@metronews.ca

While making movies, Guillermo del Toro (Pan's Labyrinth, Pacific Rim) keeps imaginatively illustrated journals. Select pages are used here for a fascinating discussion about his influences and obsessions, with contributions by James Cameron, Tom Cruise and Alfonso Cuarón. Thankfully, you can double-tap and zoom to explore their worlds in intimate detail.

Box office

Disney freezes out demons

On a wintery weekend, Disney's Frozen retook the box-office top spot with $20.7 million US, freezing out the horror spinoff Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones. According to studio estimates Sunday, Paramount's The Marked Ones debuted in second place with $18.2 million US, a total that includes Thursday night screenings.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Emile Hirsch, right, had to prove he belonged among the brave and brawny to land his role in Lone Survivor, which opens Friday. CONTRIBUTED

How Hirsch got huge

Lone Survivor. Actor was told he didn't have the 'physicality' to play a SEAL — cue to Rocky theme song

MATT PRIGGE
Metro World News in New York

Emile Hirsch isn't a ripped type, like his Lone Survivor castmates Mark Wahlberg and Taylor Kitsch. Yet he plays a SEAL in the adaptation of Marcus Luttrell's book, which details a mission gone disastrously awry when a quartet of soldiers went to capture or kill a Taliban leader in 2005 and wound up ambushed, fighting for their lives. Hirsch, who plays soldier Danny Dietz, says it was intensely difficult — which is exactly what he wanted.

What drew you to playing a SEAL?
A lot of people when they think of Navy SEALs, they think of this G.I. Joe type. When I read the book, I realized that's not who Danny Dietz was. He was someone I could really relate to. He was an artist. He was a great drawer. He was a quiet, serious person who was soft-spoken. But when that switch flipped he was all business.

The film isn't particularly jingoistic, but it also doesn't get into the question of whether war is just or not.
It's not a political movie. It's not a movie that dabbled in, "Should we be there?" It's on a smaller scale. It's about representing the type of person or the type of courage it takes to be one of these soldiers.

Was it difficult convincing Peter Berg to cast you as one of the toughest kinds of soldiers?
Peter Berg flat-out said to me when I first tried to get the part, "You don't have the physicality. No offence, man." I just wanted to be in the movie so badly. I didn't take no for an answer. I kept on emailing him and calling him and texting him and writing him letters. Eventually he sent me this text that just read, "Show up at Gold's early tomorrow." I wrote him back and said, "Early? What time?" No response. So I realized, "OK, this is a test." I woke up at 3:30, and I went to Gold's in Venice Beach and waited there for them to come and unlock it. The guy came at 6 to open it up. He was like, "Alright, man, come back here at 8:30, Peter will be here." So I went and took a nap at my buddy's apartment.

I went back, I just followed Peter, who was working out like a beast with a trainer. At the end of the day, Pete took me aside and was like, "How badly do you want to be in this movie?" I was like, "Really f—ing bad." He was like, "How hard do you want to work?" I said, "I'll be here every day." He said, "Alright, that's what you're going to do, six days a week." I asked if he was giving me the part. He said, "No." So I trained six days a week for hours and hours a day. It was three months before they gave me the part. They were trying to simulate an environment that would make me want to quit. I never did.

How was getting out of shape after the movie wrapped? Did your body just rebel against you?
It sucked. I tried to keep lifting and keep training. I couldn't keep my body at the same level, because you'd have to train four or five hours a day. It was a withdrawal. All of a sudden you're back to this unstructured life.

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Pixies surprise again with EP2

Black Francis.
Singer talks about the attention span of the digital world and hiding away to make music

PAT HEALY
Metro World News in Boston

Black Francis sat down with Metro to talk about Pixies latest release, EP2. GETTY IMAGES

After not releasing any new music for more than 20 years, the Pixies dropped EP1 in 2013 with very little lead-up time. The band did it again last Friday with EP2, four rocking new songs from the same sessions that yielded EP1, produced by Gil Norton.

Singer Black Francis says that doing a "sneak attack" release seems like the most logical way to put out music in the ever-changing digital era, an era that finds the Pixies facing a lot of internal adjustments as well. He says the events of the past year have functioned in essence to "change our whole paradigm, basically."

Founding bassist Kim Deal quit the band earlier in 2013, and the remaining members sacked replacement Kim Shattuck this fall. The Pixies singer says he was surprised with how newsworthy the splits with both Kims were.

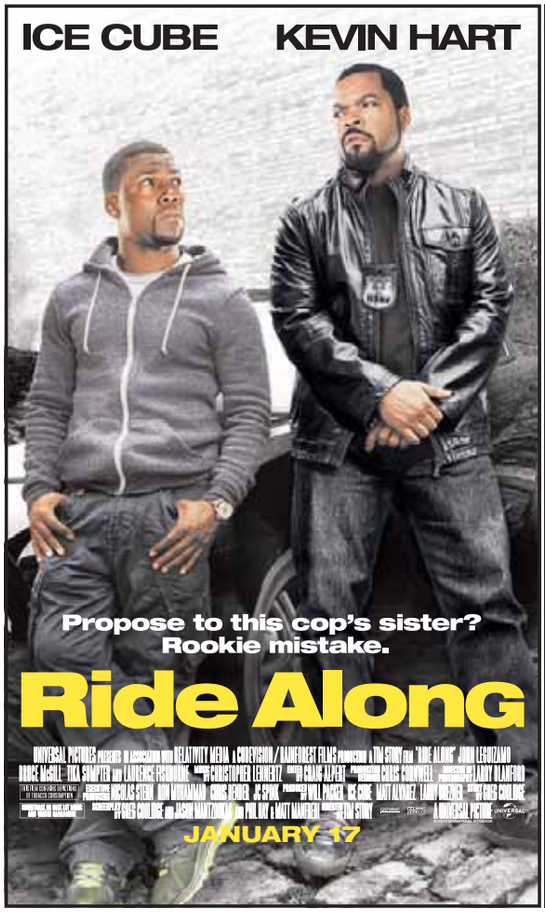
In conversation, the man who came to prominence for cryptic lyrics that went from whispers to shouts within seconds of each other, can go from jovial to frustrated in just as little time. What sometimes reads as harsh is often tempered by a laugh, yet he seem quite steadfast in his opinions.

What was behind your idea to release your first new music in 20 years without any announcements leading up to it?
I suppose it has to do with the digital distribution of music, more than anything, and the digital distribution of news and publicity statements, for that matter. Everything happens quickly and you don't need a record company. You don't even really need a publicist! That doesn't mean that you don't use these kinds of people, but you can do everything from your iPhone, in theory.

When you release announcements like that one and when you released EP1, did you keep pressing "refresh" on your Internet browser all day to see what kind of impact you were making?
Not me, personally. I don't think anyone in the band watches this from a business point of view, in terms of the things that you could monitor. We know that our manager monitors all of these kinds of things and what he's able to put into a nice, concise email, he'll put it in and say: "So, you know that release thing that we did a while ago? Here's what happened: You sold five copies in Egypt, 100 copies in Canada, 500 copies in the U.S.A." and he'll give us the whole breakdown.

As far as musicians are concerned, we're pretty content to see what the buzz is, based on what our Twitter feed looks like, or whatever feed the various band members are tuned into. That's my particular preference, Twitter. I don't have any use for the Facebook thing. I participated in that for some years, but I just found at the end of the day it was too annoying. So I got rid of my Facebook account.

I've heard EP2 now and it does seem like the original intention was to do a full length album when you guys recorded both of these EPs, because they definitely sound like birds of a feather
Yeah. I mean, it's a season's worth of music. You go into the studio for a couple of months and you make a so-called record, whatever that is. You make a pile of songs, 15 songs, 20 songs, something like that. Bigger than a breadbox!



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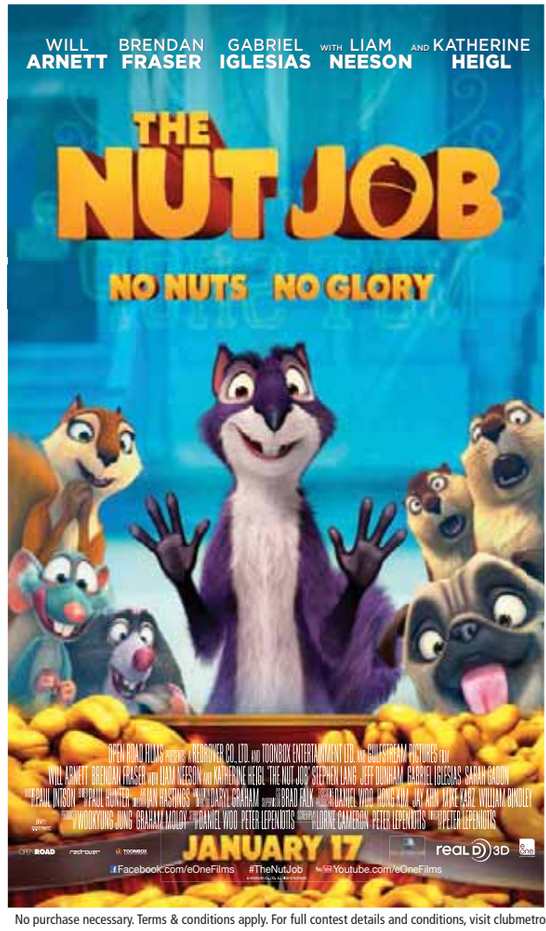

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Lutz gets it on: Cyrus wrapped around Twilight star at end of 2013

Miley Cyrus is apparently starting the New Year with a new man in her life, having been spotted getting frisky with Twilight star Kellan Lutz at a Las Vegas nightclub just before New Year's Eve, according to E! News. "They were making out and didn't seem to care who was watching. It wasn't a secret that they were together," a source says. "She kept grabbing him throughout the night. You can tell he was into her, but at times he looked like he was uncomfortable with all the attention they were getting at the club."

Twitter

@ElizabethHurley
About to go on a 8km toboggan ride. Help....

@mindykaling
You know it's time to put away your phone when you're like: hm, what's the worst thing I could tweet that would end my career irrevocably?

@SarahKSilverman
On my tombstone I just want it to say, "I'm cold"

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

Jay and Bey's sex-toy bill will take your breath away

STARGAZING
Malene Arpe
scene@metronews.ca

Happy New Year…

According to a report, Beyoncé and Jay Z spent $6,000 on sex toys. Perhaps someone should explain to them that there's absolutely no need for anything to be gold-plated.

Lily Allen refers to fellow pop stars as "a bunch of sterile bleeping Botoxed idiots that stank of desperation." She later apologizes and clarifies that, "I have no way of knowing whether it was Botox or Restylane."

Prince William will be attending Cambridge University to study agricultural management. Meanwhile, Prince Harry, following up on his trek to the South Pole, plans to have himself shot out of a cannon, work the rodeo and, in general, be 300 times cooler than his brother.

Kate Winslet. ALL IMAGES GETTY

Winslet can't Bear the thought of her new son being a Rocknroll-er

Kate Winslet confirms that her first child with husband Ned Rocknroll, son Bear born last month, has her last name instead of his. "Of course we're not going to call it Rocknroll," she tells the U.K. edition of Glamour. "We haven't really had that conversation. It was always going to have my name." But lest we think Winslet has been bowing to outside pressure, rest assured the actress doesn't care what other people think. "People might judge all they like, but I'm a f—ing grown-up," Winslet says.

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Safety Steps

Taking children into crowded venues

Taking young children into busy and crowded venues can often make even the most confident parents feel slightly nervous. Here are three easy and effective tips to ensure safety in crowds.

- Slip your business card in your children's pockets.
- With a marker, write your cell number on the back of your children's hand.
- For up-to-date ID purposes, take a photo of each of your children with your phone. Should you become separated from a child, it will be much easier for you to be reconnected. EVELYN HANNON, YUMMYMUMMYCLUB.CA

Exclusively online

Read the latest Metro content from Lyranda Martin Evans and Fiona Stevenson, authors of the hilarious, best-selling book Reasons Mommy Drinks, at metronews.ca/voices.

Don't clip tooth fairy's wings

Timing. A mom explains why she, and her daughter, aren't ready for the truth about that tiny fairy who leaves money in return for teeth lost by kids

SIDURA LUDWIG
YummyMummyClub.ca

Your kids will give you cues when they're ready to hear the truth about the tooth fairy truth. ISTOCK

The other day, I lied to my daughter.

Every once in a while, she likes to go on this website called therealtoothfairies.com. She has a favourite tooth fairy, Avalane, and has been known to write her letters. At night, I take the letters out from under her pillow and put back a note, usually written in cursive so she won't recognize my handwriting.

I have mixed feelings about our scenario.

I don't like that she's found a website that basically dictates to her how she should imagine the tooth fairy. The website also charges to upgrade to different activities, which she knows I flat out refuse to allow her to do.

Does the tooth fairy really need to be more commercial than the toonie she gets under her pillow when she loses a tooth?

However, I have no problem in general with the concept for a tooth fairy. And let's face it: realizing that the tooth fairy is just your parents is one of those rites-of-passage into older childhood. She's six. I want her to stay young for as long as she can.

Recently, after fiddling around on her favourite website and printing out a copy of her latest letter, she said to me, "Mommy, is it really just you sending me the letters?"

Usually I parent by the philosophy, "If they're old enough to ask, they're old enough to know."

So, at first I said "Yes."

And then I saw her face. She was frozen. Her mouth did not turn up into that "I knew it!" smile.

She looked like she was willing herself not to process my words. Her eyes searched mine. She said it again, "No really, mommy. Is it you sending me the letters?"

And then I got it. She wasn't ready yet. And she was giving me a way out.

So I lied: "I'm the one who passes your letters onto the tooth fairy and makes sure they get there."

That's when she smiled. "Oh! OK. Because everyone at school says there's no such thing as the tooth fairy — that it's just your parents.

"I tell them, 'No! My parents don't have wings! My mother's name isn't Avalane!'"

And she ran off to put her latest letter under her pillow.

I think she knows her time will come when she won't believe this anymore.

I remember the night her older brother came downstairs and said, "It's just you guys, right?" He had the "I knew it!" smile.

I think she might even know this is a game she and I play together, that as soon as she admits to knowing, the game will stop.

Recently, she woke me early to decode the cursive in the letter she found under her pillow. Avalane told her she can't wait until her current wiggly tooth falls out, and that believing is something you feel in your heart (thank you, classic Disney).

She took the letter back from me, held it against her chest and then skipped off with that smile.

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Flash food. Flank Steak with Shiitake Mushrooms & Hoisin Sauce

This recipe serves four. MIKE MCCOLL, FROM THE BEST OF ROSE REISMAN (WHITECAP BOOKS)

ROSE REISMAN
For more, visit rosereisman.com or follow her on twitter @rosereisman

One of my favourite dinners for the family is a lean sliced steak with a tasty sauce and a salad to start your meal.

You can enjoy meat at least twice a week and still eat healthy — providing you're eating the right cut of beef. My go-to steak is flank since it's tender, lean and quick cooking. Consider that six ounces of flank steak has only five grams of saturated fat compared to a rib steak that has 14 grams.

There's a lot more artery clogging fat when you indulge in the fattier cut.

If you have the time, you can tenderize the flank steak by marinating in a light bottled salad dressing or any oil and acidic ingredient such as balsamic vinegar or lemon juice. Add some herbs and spices of your choice. The steak will always be more tender if you can marinate it in the morning or the night before.

If you don't have sweet rice vinegar or mirin, you can use regular rice vinegar and add one tablespoon of sugar and heat gently to dissolve. Chinese five-spice powder is available in the dried herb section of your supermarket. It's a combination of cinnamon, star anise, cloves, pepper and fennel. If you don't have shiitake mushrooms, feel free to use another mushroom of your choice such as button, oyster or brown, being sure to cook the mushrooms until all the moisture evaporates.

I love my steaks served medium rare, which is about 130 F. Use a meat thermometer to test the doneness. Remember that the steak continues cooking for about 10 minutes after you remove it from the heat, so don't overcook it.

If you want a grain alongside the steak, try brown rice or soba or rice noodles.

Nutritional information

Per serving: 429 calories; 21.4 g carbohydrates; 4.7 g fibre; 41 g protein; 18 g total fat; 6.6 g saturated fat; 111 mg cholesterol; 680 mg sodium

Ingredients

Mushroom Hoisin Sauce
- 1/3 cup sweet rice wine vinegar or mirin
- 1 1/2 tsp Chinese five-spice powder
- 1/3 cup hoisin sauce
- 2 tbsp toasted sesame seeds
- 3 tbsp rice vinegar
- 2 tbsp low-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tbsp sesame oil

- 1 lb whole shiitake mushrooms, cleaned with stem removed
- 2 green onions, sliced for garnish
- 1 1/2 lb flank steak

Directions

1. Combine mirin, five-spice powder, hoisin, sesame seeds, vinegar, soy sauce and sesame oil. Pour 1/4 cup of the sauce over the flank steak, letting it marinate while you cook the mushrooms.

2. In a large skillet sprayed with vegetable oil, sauté mushrooms 12 minutes or until tender. Add another 1/4 cup of the sauce and cook one minute.

3. In a grill pan sprayed with vegetable oil, grill steak on medium-high heat 8 minutes per side or until done to your preference. Let sit 10 minutes.

4. Slice steak against grain into thin slices, scatter the whole mushrooms overtop, garnish with the green onions. Serve with the remaining sauce. **THE BEST OF ROSE REISMAN (WHITECAP BOOKS) BY ROSE REISMAN**

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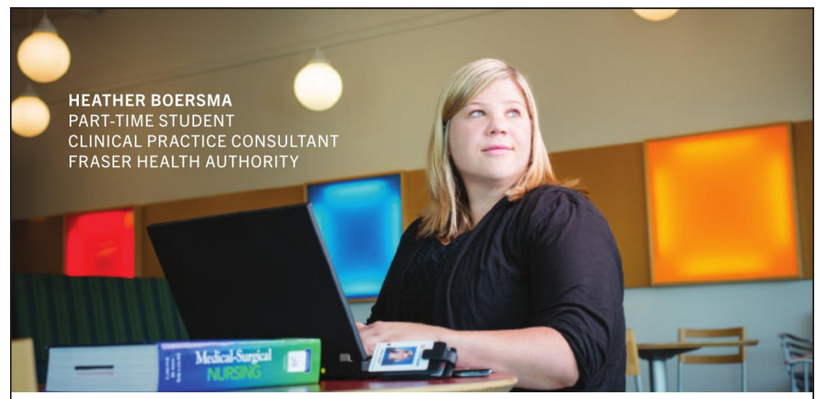

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'Round the world wisdom

Don't let your stuff weigh you down

The severe market crash in October 2008 changed my life. I started running to regain my health, both emotional and physical. Shortly after I took my first steps, I ran the Gobi March in China in June '09, followed by the Atacama Crossing in Chile in '10 and the Sahara Race in Egypt in '11. In this post, I share a lesson about life, learned from the desert.

LESSONS FROM THE DESERT
Stéfan Danis
life@metronews.ca

Too much stuff to settle into your business? Let go of the little things. ISTOCK

The Gobi race is unaided and participants are required to carry their own backpacks including clothing, sleeping, medical and survival gear as well as food for a week. Then, you have to run the race with your pack on your back.

As a result, first timers spend a large amount of time weighing their food in order to carry the least amount of weight for the greatest energy output. What I noticed was that the more the participants believed they were efficient at choosing their food, the more they added, just in case. In effect, if you thought you were a good packer, then you just brought out more stuff!

I was advised prior to the race that many first timers made the mistake of over-packing and in fact would throw out their food once they grew fatigued and realized they no longer could carry the weight. Racers would spend more time thinking about packing "enough" than checking if their shoulders and back were strong enough to carry it.

Not only did my coach suggest I travel light, he advised me to under-pack. "If you're in trouble, others will give you their food, happy to lighten their load," he said.

We tend to overestimate what we need, both in life and when running a desert. And when you realize that you carry your life's essentials and your baggage on your back, it becomes easier to shed it.

STÉFAN DANIS IS THE CEO OF NEXCAREER AND MANDRAKE, AND THE AUTHOR OF GOBI RUNNER

Skills that will lead to success in 2014

Have you got the goods? The common abilities every future employee should covet this coming year

SHAHEERAH KAYANI
TalentEgg.ca

Don't let your resumé get too long-winded. Keep it simple and skill-focused. ISTOCK

Many employers look for a common set of skills and want to see proof that you have these skills.

Always study the job description carefully and note the specific skills required. This lets you know exactly what the employer will be looking for in your resumé and application.

Trying to match an employer's expectations can be daunting, but you've likely developed these skills through past work experience or volunteering.

Here's a quick guide to the most common skills employers look for and examples of how to showcase these skills on your resumé:

Communication
This is a skill every employer values. Communication includes three different categories: verbal, listening, and written.

You will need communication skills in order to listen effectively to your boss, co-workers or clients; communicate and facilitate discussions effectively with your team; prepare and deliver presentations; write work reports and more.

Sample point showcasing this skill: Excellent communication skills developed through experience in retail, customer service, telemarketing, front desk reception, journalism and so on.

Computer skills
Most jobs require you to have a basic understanding of computer programs such as Excel and Microsoft Office, as well as skills in Internet navigation, social media sites and email systems.

Sample point showcasing this skill: Proficient computer literacy proven through work experience in front-desk IT, software programming and applications, spreadsheet tabulations, social media coordination, etc.

Research skills
This skill refers to your ability to think critically, analyze situations from multiple viewpoints and research matters to define key issues.

Sample point showcasing this skill: Highly critical thinker with effective researching skills proven through work experience in or as a research assistant, resource developer, conflict resolution, project management, etc.

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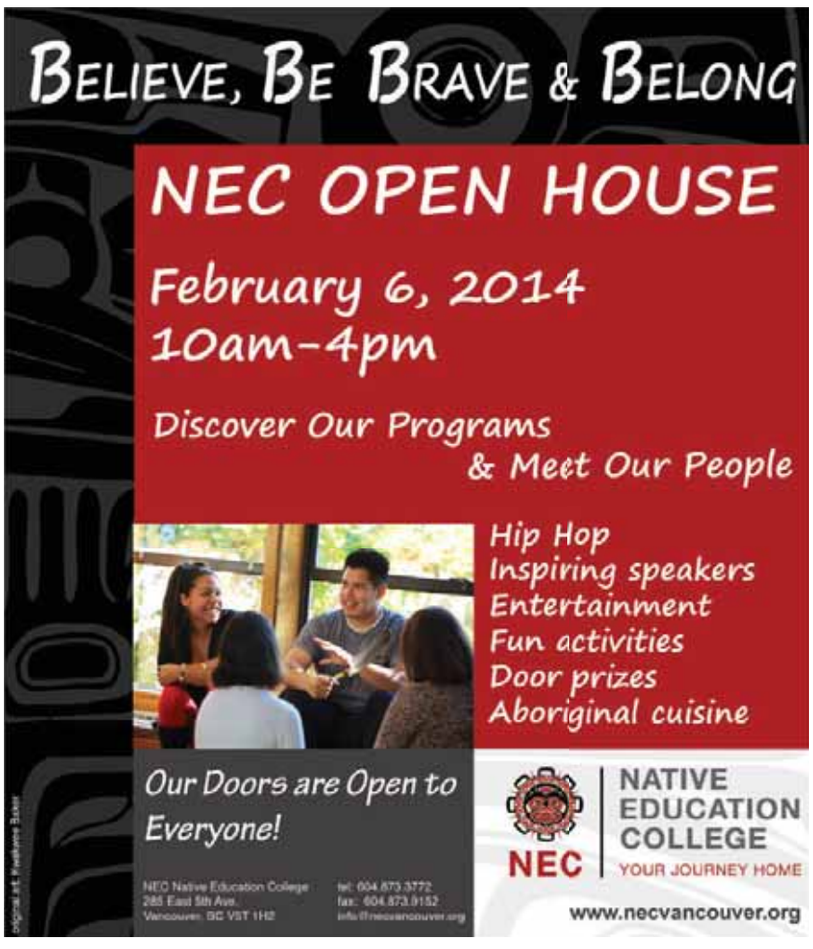

Fire escape: So you've been canned, now what's your plan?

Get to the bottom of your boot. What to do after you've been terminated from your job

PARISA NIKFARJAM
TalentEgg.ca

Getting let go from any job is tough and in many cases, embarrassing, but that shouldn't dissuade you from assessing your termination and ensuring that it accords with applicable laws. ISTOCK

When you're just getting your foot in the door, the hardest thing to contemplate is being fired.

Knowing your rights and obligations during an otherwise uncertain and difficult time will help when transitioning from one job to another.

The following is a snapshot of some of the issues for you to be aware when you've lost your job:

Is the termination lawful?

While it is the employer's prerogative to dismiss employees at any time (by either having cause or providing notice or payment in lieu of notice), not all dismissals are lawful.

It is therefore crucial to determine why you've been fired. If any of the following occurs, your dismissal may not be justifiable. The following restrictions apply to Ontario only. Provincial laws vary:

- Dismissal is based on a prohibited ground under the Ontario Human Rights Code, such as disability, age, sex or sexual orientation.
- Dismissal follows a complaint of harassment or violence in the workplace.
- Dismissal follows a complaint under the Employment Standards Act, 2000 (ESA) including payment of wages and overtime pay.
- Dismissal occurs during leaves of absence such as pregnancy leave and emergency leave, or immediately thereafter.

If your dismissal is based on any of the above, remember that any legal remedy you have may carry a time limitation, so it is best that you consult with legal counsel or start the appropriate process as soon as possible.

Entitlement to termination pay

Your employment may come to an end for "just cause" or "without cause."

If you've been fired for just cause, the employer has ended the relationship for a particular reason such as theft, illegal activity, excessive lying, workplace violence or other inappropriate behaviour. In this circumstance, you're not entitled to any payment as a result of your termination. These terminations are often contentious. It is important to seek legal advice if this is the basis of your termination, as you may have been wrongfully dismissed.

If you've been fired without cause, the employment relationship has been terminated but not necessarily as a result of your actions. This is often the case where the employer is downsizing or where the relationship just isn't a good fit. In Ontario, in this case you have minimum entitlements under the Employment Standards Act, 2000 (ESA).

There is an entitlement to notice (or pay in lieu), which is based on your length of service (one week per year of service), and is currently capped at eight weeks' compensation.

In some circumstances, you may also have a right to statutory severance pay once you've worked for more than five years.

If your employment contract does not restrict your entitlements to these minimum standards, you may wish to negotiate for a more generous termination package that considers your length of service, your age, the nature of your position and the availability of comparable alternative employment.

On top of notice or pay in lieu of notice, you are also entitled to benefits for at least your minimum notice period under the ESA, so you should ensure that this is a part of your termination package. If you have received less than what you are entitled to, you may also have been wrongfully dismissed.

DISCLAIMER: THIS ARTICLE IS FOR GENERAL DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY AND SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS LEGAL ADVICE.

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Canucks Dan Hamhuis and goaltender Eddie Lack react as the Ducks celebrate Corey Perry's overtime goal on Sunday in Anaheim. JEFF GROSS/GETTY IMAGES

Canucks bested on OT buzzer beater

NHL. Perry plays familiar role of hero as Ducks improve to 17-0-2 at home

Corey Perry scored his league-leading eighth game-winning goal of the season with 1.3 seconds on the clock in overtime, giving the Anaheim Ducks a come-from-behind 4-3 victory over the Vancouver Canucks on Sunday night.

The Ducks, off to a franchise-best 31-8-5 start — 17-0-2 at Honda Center — are the only team in the league without a regulation loss at home. Anaheim is also the third NHL team to open a season with a home-point streak of 19 or more games, joining San Jose (2008-09) and Philadelphia (1979-80).

On Sunday

Ducks	Canucks
4	3

The Ducks have also won 13 of 14 games overall since losing back-to-back shootout decisions against the Sharks and Kings.

Nick Bonino got the tying goal with 1:27 left in the third period. Saku Koivu and Matt Beleskey scored in the second and Jonas Hiller stopped 17 shots to extend his club-record and career-best winning streak to 11 games.

Ryan Kesler and Henrik Sedin scored power-play goals two minutes apart in the first, and defenceman Kevin Bieksa scored in the third for the Canucks.

Rookie Eddie Lack made a career-high 45 saves one night after Roberto Luongo had 45 in a loss to Los Angeles in his return following a three-game absence with a groin injury.

Luongo was scratched for this one, and Lack's backup was 43-year-old Rob Laurie — who has never appeared in an NHL game and hasn't played professionally since 2002. But he lives in Southern California and was summoned on an emergency basis. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

49ers kick Packers out of playoffs

Phil Dawson celebrates his game-winning field goal. GETTY IMAGES

Phil Dawson kicked a 33-yard field goal as time expired, and Colin Kaepernick threw for 227 yards and ran for another 98 to lead the San Francisco 49ers past the Green Bay Packers 23-20 on Sunday night in a frigid NFC wild-card game.

In a back-and-forth fourth quarter, the 49ers (13-4) threw the final punch. Kaepernick escaped a blitz on third-and-eight and scrambled for an 11-yard gain to the 27 with 1:13 left.

"Just trying to figure out a way to get that first down," Kaepernick said. "Had a play called, we didn't get the look that we wanted. It worked out for us."

Dawson nailed the winning kick five plays later.

Chargers win 5th in a row

In Sunday's other game, the San Diego Chargers defeated the Cincinnati Bengals 27-10 to earn a date next week with Denver — the AFC's top seed.

The defending NFC champions came away with a huge win in conditions that resembled a meat locker.

San Francisco plays at Carolina next Sunday.

Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers finished with 177 yards and a touchdown on 17 of 26 passing attempts.

"Very disappointing, personally," Rodgers said. "It's frustrating not to play your best game in tough conditions. Defence holds them to 23 points. We should win that game." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NLL

Stealth lose wild season opener to Mammoth

Vancouver's second foray into the National Lacrosse League began with a back-and-forth high-scoring loss to the Colorado Mammoth on Saturday.

The Vancouver Stealth were defeated on the road by a final score of 13-12, despite an eight-point night (one goal and seven assists) from Alex Gajic.

The Stealth's home opener is Saturday against the Minnesota Swarm at the Langley Events Centre. METRO

Hockey

Canada finishes 4th at world juniors

For the second straight year, Team Canada came away from the world junior championships without a medal.

Canada lost to Russia 2-1 in Sunday's bronze-medal game. Josh Morrissey scored the lone goal of the game for Canada.

Finland won the gold medal, thanks to a 3-2 overtime victory over Sweden, the host nation, later in the day. Rasmus Ristolainen, who plays for the Buffalo Sabres, scored the winning goal. METRO

Canada's Jonathan Drouin reacts after losing 2-1 to Russia on Sunday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

WHL

Giants take 2 of 3 over weekend

The Vancouver Giants were victorious in two of three games this weekend, including a split against the No. 2-ranked team in the entire CHL — the Kelowna Rockets.

The Giants defeated the Rockets 4-2 on Friday, ending Kelowna's winning streak at 16 games. After losing Saturday in Kelowna, the Giants capped off the weekend with a 4-2 win over the Tri-City Americans on Sunday. METRO

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
What you gain over the coming week will more than make up for what you have lost, so be of good cheer. Sometimes something has to go out of your life before something new can come in.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
A relationship that has fallen into a rut can be spiced up again but it won't happen if you keep looking back to the past.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
It will pay you to not be quite so open about what you are doing and why. You don't have to be dishonest but you do have to keep information that could be useful to rivals.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
You are about to make a vital decision, one that could change the course of your life. It may not be the change itself that worries you so much as how others will react. Don't worry, they'll get used to it.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
There may be tension in the air over the next few days and it may linger until Mercury changes signs next weekend. It won't cause you any major problems but try not to snap at people for no reason.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Some may find it hard to believe you are in touch with your emotions and that's good because if you rely entirely on your rational mind today you could miss out. Let your heart rule your head.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You may think that you can do as you please and get away with it but the planets warn if you go too far today you could create a backlash that is tough to contain. Play it safe.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
The choices you make over the next few days will have a major impact on the direction your life takes over the next few months, so make them wisely.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
There may have been some confusion of late but you should find it easy to set the record straight today. If your remarks have been taken out of context make sure everyone knows it.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
It is important that you tell the truth today, even if by doing so you cause yourself, and maybe others, a certain amount of grief.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You tend to fear the worst at this time of year, so don't be surprised if you find yourself a bit hesitant as the new week begins. The good news is that come the weekend you'll be your old self again.

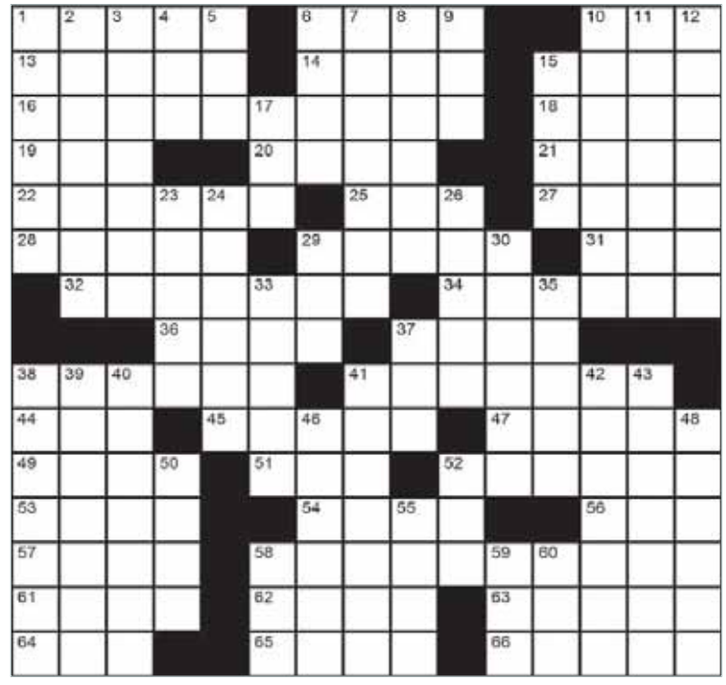
♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
An important arrangement may have to be changed late today but don't get angry because it will work in your favour. Strange as it may seem but your friends really do know what is best for you.

SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



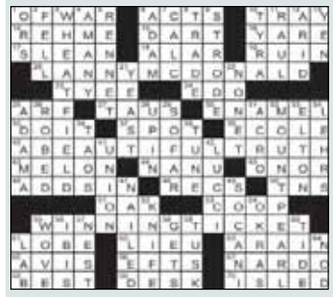
Across

1. Talk show host Mr. Smiley
6. Wile E. Coyote's supplier
10. Low-__ (Dieter's choice)
13. Excursus
14. Bok __ (Vegetable)
15. Healthy, in Spain
16. Medical drama on CTV: 2 wds.
18. Play interlude, __'acte
19. Greek alphabet's 7th letter
20. Sales jobs, commonly
21. Ms. Falco
22. Empathize
25. Play on words
27. Metal band, Quiet __
28. When doubled, Barbra Streisand's 'married lady' song from film Funny Girl
29. Half-hearted
31. Behave
32. __ Station, Nova Scotia
34. "I'm Gonna __ Good!" by Shania Twain
36. City of Spain
37. Ms. Remini
38. Pinned-at 'toy', __ doll
41. Fuel-finding drills: 2 wds.
44. Sovereignly sort, shortly
45. Preps teeth for fillings
47. Thanks: French
49. Comfy
51. Pre-1947 British rule in India
52. Don't yield from a stance: 2 wds.
53. Scrabble piece
54. 'Smart' suffix
56. Feline's fluff
57. "As if!": 2 wds.
58. Posh neighbourhood of Ottawa, __ Park
61. "Young __" (1988)
62. Intro-to-drawing class, __ _
63. The States = _ _ __ _
64. Cornerstone abbr.
65. "Excuse me..."
66. Retro record

Down

1. Policing weapons
2. Together, sports-style: 3 wds.
3. Baroque composer nicknamed 'The Red Priest'
4. Forest's Oscar-winning role
5. John McCain, e.g.
6. Yearn
7. Food Network culinary competition series, "__ Canada"
8. Cleans the floor's mess: 2 wds.
9. Middle
10. City on the South Shore near the Island of Montreal
11. Capital city of ancient Syria
12. Country star Ms. Lynn
15. Clairvoyant
17. Athens' country, to the IOC
23. Had a cold
24. Non-stick coating in cookware
26. Mr. Bruce who played Dr. Watson in Sherlock Holmes films
29. __-la-la!
30. "Goodness gracious...": 2 wds.
33. Smell
35. Burglar
37. Fleur-de-__ [var. sp.]
38. Trace of something
39. Author's anthology
40. Luxurious
41. Items and things
42. Canadian Forces helicopter, CH-146 __
43. Like a pre-grooming dog
46. Houses for lords
48. Jennifer Lopez hit: 2 wds.
50. Acquires
52. Grad letters
55. Comedian's play-like routine
58. Knock the door
59. Adore, informally
60. "It __ _." (Fancy response to "Who's there?")

Friday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

Friday's Sudoku

1	2	3	9	5	6	8	4	7
5	8	9	7	1	4	2	3	6
7	4	6	3	8	2	9	5	1
3	5	7	1	9	8	6	2	4
9	1	4	6	2	7	5	8	3
2	6	8	4	3	5	7	1	9
6	7	2	8	4	1	3	9	5
8	9	1	5	6	3	4	7	2
4	3	5	2	7	9	1	6	8

Sudoku

	9		5		6		2	
2			7		9			1
	4			3			8	
		2				8		
3	7						5	4
		5				7		
	2			6			3	
1			2		5			8
	5		3		4		9	

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